

# Sir Ian Thomson : Obituary

THOMSON Sir Ian (Edinburgh) Suddenly, on March 13, 2008, much loved husband of Nancy and father of Andrew, Peter, John, David, Richard, Mark, Sally and Douglas, graduate of Glasgow University, loyal servant of Scotland, Fiji and the British Crown. Funeral service at Inverleith Parish Church, on Saturday, March 22, at 11 am.

## Sir Ian Thomson dies in Scotland

Saturday, March 15, 2008

A prominent 20th century leader in the Fiji Islands, Sir Ian Thomson, KBE, CMG, MBE (mil), died in Edinburgh, Scotland on March 13.

He was born in Glasgow, Scotland, on January 8, 1920, attending Glasgow High School and graduating from Glasgow University with a masters degree in political economy. He served briefly in the Black Watch, Royal Highland Regiment in Scotland before being posted to Fiji as an administrative officer in the Colonial Service.

He arrived in Fiji in March 1941, taking up duties as ADC to the Governor of Fiji, Sir Harry Luke. With Japan's entry into WW2, Government House in Suva became a hive of strategic operations with Ian Thomson responsible for all decoding.

In 1942, as a young lieutenant, he joined C Company, 3rd Bn, Fiji Infantry Regiment, commanded by the high-ranking Fijian chief, Ratu Sir Edward Cakobau. They camped on the Tailevu coast carrying out coastal surveillance and training for combat in the Solomon Islands.

For nine months of 1943 and 1944, now as adjutant to the 3rd Bn, FIR, he was in Bougainville on the front line of military action against Japanese forces. On his return to Fiji as a captain, he was awarded the MBE (Mil) in recognition of gallant and distinguished service.

With the cessation of WW2, Sir Ian resumed civilian duties and married Nancy Kearsley of Vatuwaqa, Suva in 1945. Nancy Kearsley, a fourth generation Fiji islander, was the loving wife of Sir Ian until her untimely death in 1988. Together they raised seven sons and a daughter.

For the next 21 years, Sir Ian was assigned positions of responsibility around the Fiji Islands, first as a district officer for the provinces of Lau, Lomaiviti and Kadavu, then as a district officer for the Northern Division of Fiji. His fellow district officer in the Northern Division was his life-long friend Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, later to be the first president of Fiji. Sir Ian served as the commissioner of the Western Division of Fiji in the early sixties.

Sir Ian's close association with Fiji land issues began when in 1957 Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna selected Sir Ian as his understudy and eventual replacement as chairman of the Native Lands and Fisheries Commission. Sir Ian was a fluent speaker of the Fijian language.

Sir Ian was knighted by the Queen at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh in 1984.

Due to Lady Nancy Thomson's ill-health, he retired to Scotland in 1986.